

STUDYING THE PLAY

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A Questionnaire Method

I. Formative Influences at Work in the Play

Note: A play is usually the result of the interaction of at least four influences:—the author; the early audiences; the theatrical structure for which it was first written, with the involved possibilities and limitations; and the original producing company. It may also show the effects of the influence of any of five others—a source of the plot (in literature or in life), a special occasion for which it was written, a régisseur (or a stage manager), a reviser, and (in the printed form only) an editor.

a. (1) At what date was the play written? (2) At what date was it first produced? (3) At what date was it first published? (4) What is the evidence for these dates?

b. Was this play affected by the tastes and prejudices of any given audience? If so, in what way?

c. How was it affected by the physical conditions of the theatre for which it was written (as to picture-stage or platform-stage, the size of the stage, the size of the auditorium, the presence or absence of scenery, the nature of the scenery, the lighting conditions, and so on)? Try to visualize the original performance.

d. (1) Was the play written for a given company? (2) How many players would be required for its performance? (3) Was the structure of the play or were the characterizations in it affected by the physique, the temperament, or the special abilities of any of the actors intended for the various rôles? (4) Is the characterization of any rôle traditional from the actor who "created" it?

- e.* Was anything in the plot or the characterization derived from a source or sources in literature or in life, or was the drama in any way affected by a parallel treatment of the subject with which the author was familiar?
- f.* (1) How much is the essential personality of the author evident in the play, as suggested by what you know of the facts of his life and the nature of his other works? How is this personality manifested? (2) Did the author perhaps revise the play after the lapse of several years? If so, is it possible to distinguish between his earlier and later work by style or other traits?
- g.* Have the additions or changes been made by other hands, such as a *régisseur*, a reviser, or an editor? What is the evidence? Are there stylistic or other differences?
- h.* Are there any other particularly interesting facts in the stage or editorial history of the play?

II. The General Nature of the Play

- a.* Is the play primarily a drama of plot-action, of character, of idea, of atmosphere, of spectacle, or of dialogue? (It is possible, although not probable, that two or more of these interests are balanced.) Questions *b-f* following will aid you to give your reasons.
- b.* Is there much action in the story? Is it sensational? exciting generally? at all?
- c.* Have you generally natural characters (i. e., characters that are life-like) in natural situations? Or unnatural characters in natural situations? Or natural characters in unnatural situations? Or unnatural characters in unnatural situations? Discuss. (In this connection make some allowance for the idealizing effect of verse if the play be cast in that form.)
- d.* (1) Is the play perhaps founded upon an initial situation that is improbable? If so, granting the initial assumption, is what follows probable? (2) Has any at-

tempt been made to make the improbable circumstances seem probable? Explain.

e. (1) Does the play leave you impressed with any moral or spiritual conception? Or with any material (sociological, political, or vocational) thought? If so, what? (2) Does the writer appear to have written with any other object than to produce a work of art? In intention is he primarily an artist, an entertainer, a moralist, or a propagandist? Does he preach? (3) On sober reflection do you agree with his ideas? Why or why not?

f. Distinguishing sharply between dialogue that advances plot-action, dialogue that interprets the character of the speaker, dialogue that emphasizes the dominant thought of the scene, dialogue that gives atmosphere or aids the imagination to conceive the setting, and dialogue written primarily for the sake of its own epigrammatic or rhetorical brilliance, attempt to determine which of these various types appear in the play. Which predominates? Does any passage accomplish two or more of these purposes at once?

g. Classify the play as belonging to one of the ordinarily accepted types of drama, as tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, and the like. Give your reasons.

h. Classify the play as poetic, rhetorical, or prosaic in tone. If poetic, is its effect primarily epic, lyric, or dramatic?

i. Is the play *realistic* in method; i. e., does it earnestly seek to present character or atmosphere as they have been actually observed in life, and with psychological truth? Or does it belong to the *romantic* school; i. e., does it strike a note above the natural, either by treating material that is strikingly adventurous or non-human, or by idealizing character, sentiment, or atmosphere without attempting photographic fidelity to detail? Or is it intentionally *satirical*, either humorously or bitterly picturing life, especially in its reputedly great moments,

depreciatingly and with exaggeration of human imperfections (cf. Joan of Arc in *I Henry VI*, or Philip Moeller's *Helena's Husband*)? (2) Or is its material of one of the above types and its treatment of another? If so, is the combination artistically effective?

j. Is the play perhaps symbolic, either by general allegorical intention, or by the introduction of persons or objects having a special significance aside from their function in the development of the plot? If so, how is the symbolism made clear?

k. (1) Is the play stageable? (2) Does it act well? (3) Are there any important scenes or parts that depend for their effectiveness upon action without words?

l. In the light of this paper as a whole, do you find the author most interesting as philosopher, as poet (epic, lyric, or dramatic), as observer and interpreter of human nature, as story-teller, as dramatic technician, or as stylist?

III. The Organization of the Plot Material

a. Is the drama progressive; i. e., is it a drama of advancing plot-action (as in *Othello*)? Or is it static; i. e., is it a drama of mere situation and atmosphere (as in Maeterlinck's *The Blind*) or of discussion (as in Shaw's *Getting Married*)?

b. *(1) Has one of the characters a definite aim that he (she) is attempting to accomplish throughout the play? *(2) Is he (she) the central character or protagonist (as in *Macbeth*), or the antagonist (as in *Othello*)? *(3) What are his (her) motives? (Always carefully distinguish between the motives of the character in an action and the artistic purpose of the author in making him so act.) *(4) What are the obstacles to his accomplishing his purpose? the will, actions, or mere

* Questions that form the starting point for elementary study are marked with an asterisk throughout these pages.

existence of another person? the moral law? fate? the supernatural? his own nature? social opinion? social conditions? mere accident? or something other than any of these? *(5) What special qualities in himself, and what assistance (conscious or unconscious) from others, aid him in his attempts? *(6) Are the obstacles removed? by his own acts? the acts of others? the act of God (or the author)? (7) How far, and by what means, are your sympathies directed toward the central character by the author? Are your sympathies in any respect against him? (8) How far, and by what means, are your sympathies directed against the opposing character (the antagonist)? Are your sympathies in any respect with him? (9) What effect have the facts of (7) and (8) on the dramatic tension of the play? (10) Or is the protagonist a pair (as in *Romeo and Juliet*), or a group (as in Hauptmann's *The Weavers*)? Or are two sets or groups evenly balanced (as in Galsworthy's *Strife*)?

c. (1) How many characters in the play? (2) Endeavor to group them according as they favor or oppose the efforts of the chief active characters. Is the action of each in the matter conscious or unconscious? Does any character shift from a favoring to an opposing attitude, or vice versa, during the action of the play? Has this any determining effect upon the outcome? (3) Are any characters or character-groups indifferent to the main action? If so, what is his (her, their) function? (Cf. III, n.) (4) Is there any marked symmetry (or balance) of two groups? (5) Are there any link-characters connecting two groups and thus giving the play greater coherence? (6) Could any character be dispensed with? Would it be better so?

d. *(1) In structure does the play belong to the synthetic type, presenting the whole conflict from beginning to end, with Exposition, Rise, Crisis, Fall, and Close (as in *Romeo and Juliet*)? Or does it belong to the analytic

(retrospective or catastrophic) type, presenting only the consequences in the final scenes of the story (as in Ibsen's *Ghosts*)? Or is the play constructed on a model different from either the five-part Rise-and-Fall or the analytic type? If so, what? (Cf. *I. Tamburlaine*.) (2) Could the story be better told in one of the other forms? (Distinguish this question, as a whole, carefully from III, a.)

e. (1) In the case of a play of the synthetic type, locate, if possible, the five parts: Exposition, Rise, Crisis, Fall, and Close. (2) Has it an "exciting force" near the beginning, forcing the action up the Rise? (3) Has it a "tragic force" near the middle, forcing the action down the Fall? (4) Has it a final "force of suspense"? (5) Has the play a "big scene"? What? (6) What parts of the story are given on the stage and what are given indirectly by narrative later? Are any sections given by characters looking off-stage (as in *The Weavers*, IV, V)? Do sounds of cries come from off-stage? Could any part be more effectively treated by one of the other methods indicated in (6)?

f. In the case of a play of the analytic type, locate in the *story* (as distinguished from the play): the initial conditions, the critical decision, and the outcome. How much of the story is actually represented in the play? Does the play contain either the main or a subordinate Crisis of the story?

g. (1) Is the play divided into Acts? How many? Why exactly this division? Discuss. (2) Are two or more successive conflicts to be traced in a given Act (cf. *Monna Vanna*)? (3) Are the Acts, or any of them, divided into Scenes? On what principle? How many Scenes in all? Why this number?

h. The Opening: *(1) Why open the play at that precise locality, and at that moment of that day? (2) Do the opening scenes hold interest in themselves? By what methods? Is any excitement or stir created, even about

an unessential, for a curtain-raising of action? *(3) Do the opening scenes reveal the past? Naturally? Subtly? Over how much of the play does this revelation of the situation preceding the opening of the play (the "exposition") extend? (4) Do they prepare for the future? How? *(5) Does the first scene "strike the key-note" of the mood of the play? How? What mood? (6) Does Act I effectively introduce all the important characters? Is the identity of each character clearly established at his or her first appearance? By what means? How much does the Act reveal of their personalities? (7) Is the entrance of the principal character delayed? Is it prepared for in the preceding dialogue? Is it given a special emphasis by the display of significant character traits or language, by costume, or by stage management? (8) Are any characters introduced merely to facilitate the exposition? (9) Is the opening handled with striking ingenuity? If so, how?

i. The Crisis: *(1) Is there a supreme crucial moment in the play, emphasized by the author and involving an incident or a decision that, if reversed, would have completely altered the Close? (2) Is the Crisis located to advantage? Where? (3) Is it staged to advantage? How? (4) Does the plot "zigzag" up to the Crisis through alternating excitement and calm? (5) Is the Crisis sharply pointed by negative preparation; i. e., is there a feeling that "All is lost" until, by a quick reversal, "All is won"? (6) Is there a long "big speech" at the Crisis? (7) Is the effect of the Crisis heightened by surprise, either at the method of bringing about the Crisis, or at its method of solution, or by a "tag" immediately following? (8) Is the Crisis followed by a "quick curtain" or dulled by following speeches of a lower pitch? Is the handling of the technique here a matter of the taste of the author or the demands of the staging?

j. The Close: *(1) Does the main conflict of the play continue to the end of the last Act? (2) Does the Fall

hold the attention as closely as the Rise? (3) Is the suspense maintained to the very end? By the introduction of new complications, or how? *(4) Is the end the inevitable result of character? *(5) Is the outcome ethical? (6) Is the end determinate or indeterminate; i. e., is tranquillity completely re-established, or do you wonder concerning the permanency of the solution? (7) Has it taken particular skill to avoid an anticlimax? Is any other method of climax employed than the plotted end-heightening of the "well-made play"? Is the ending emphatic through action, situation, surprise, irony (cf. *The Weavers*), pictorial effect, or thought? Or (as in *The Madras House*) is it not emphatic at all? (8) What are the final words, to whom are they given, and why? (9) Is any special device used to emphasize the dominant impression of the end (cf. *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*)?

k. *(1) Are there subplots, one or more? Loosely or intimately connected with the main plot? (2) Parallel with the main plot, in contrast with it, a comic relief to a serious main theme, or in any other specific relation? (3) Or is there perhaps a play within the play? If so, what is its function?

l. (1) Is the plot simple, complex, compound, or compound-complex? (2) Has the play Unity of Plot? (3) Is any special device used to strengthen the plot-unity (as the curse and the ghosts in *Richard III*)? (4) Has the play Unity of Mood (cf. *Lady Windermere's Fan*)?

m. Outside of the subplots, are there any incidents that do not help to bring about the final outcome? If so, do they serve any other purpose, such as throwing additional light upon any important character? Illustrate. (See also questions under Scene, VII, a.)

n. Are minor characters introduced to forward the plot, or to act as confidantes, or to give necessary information

to the audience, or by their comments to interpret the actions of the principal characters, or to give the spectator the feeling of approaching misfortune, or from historical interest, or for comic value, or for several of these reasons, or why?

o. (1) Is the setting of any importance as affecting the character and through them the plot? If so, how? (2) Or does any part of the setting act directly as a part of the plot machinery? If so, how? (3) Is the setting true in facts and atmosphere to the supposed time and place (cf. *The Terrible Meek*)?

p. Which, if any, of the following conventional "extraneousities," formally distinct from the sequence of the dramatic dialogue proper, are used? Discuss the reason for the employment of any that occur. (1) The Induction (or Frame). (2) The Chorus. (3) The Dumb Show. (4) The Prologue. (5) The Epilogue (sometimes in the form of a Cast Epilogue).

q. Are topical allusions or other extraneous material introduced into the dialogue? Why introduced? How introduced—skillfully motivated or crudely dragged in to raise a laugh?

r. Is any plot thread, any incident, any character, or any other dramatic element given a disproportionate emphasis? Discuss.

s. If there is an accessible source of plot, compare the play with it to determine what changes the dramatist has made, and why.

t. (1) What is the relation of the title to the play? Does it emphasize the central character (as *Macbeth*, *The Bohemian Girl*), or some other principal character (as *The Merchant of Venice*); the main plot (as *Love's Labour's Lost*), or a subplot (as *The Maid's Tragedy*); some incident in the play (as *The Tempest*); the thesis of the play (as *Man and Superman*); the scene of the

play (as *Sherwood*); the historical background of the play (as *The Siege of Rhodes*); the atmosphere of the play (as *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*); the occasion or time of presentation (as *Twelfth Night*); or some peculiar element in the nature of the play (as *The Adventures of Five Hours*)? (2) Is the title compound (as *George Barnwell*; or, *The London Merchant*)? If so, why? (3) Is the title fortunately selected, combining significance and attractiveness? Explain. Could you suggest a better title for the play? (4) Does his choice of a title throw any light upon the purpose or intended appeal of the author (as *Everyman*, *Intolerance*, *Where Is Your Daughter*, *Silk Hosiery*)?

IV. The Characters

a. (1) How many are in the cast? (2) State the relations of the principal characters. (3) Are they strikingly contrasted? Do characters of even similar functions show distinctive traits (as the three Shepherds in the *Second Shepherd's Play*, or the brothers in *The Thunderbolt*)? Or, on the contrary, are characters given speaking parts ever grouped, without individualizing touches, in one class (as Bakers 1, 2, 3, and 4 in *Cyrano de Bergerac*)? *(4) Do you know only the actions of the characters; or their actions and motives; or their actions, motives, and thoughts; or their actions, motives, thoughts, and moods? (5) Does the characterization of any character anywhere appear inconsistent? Discuss.

b. In the case of tragedy, is the hero conceived according to Aristotle's dictum that the tragic hero should be a royal and naturally virtuous individual with a weakness that causes his downfall?

c. Select an important character. (1) Is he living or a lay figure? *(2) Does he interest you merely as one of a class (Duke, American, banker, tramp), or are personal and individualizing traits added? (3) Is the portrayal of him firmly handled from his first speech on?

What does that speech tell you of him? *(4) Endeavor to establish his motive or motives at every important stage in the action of the play. Discuss his methods and their ethics. (5) Is he a simple or a complex character? (6) Does he go through a spiritual crisis or struggle? Is he stationary; or does he develop, growing morally better or worse? Is such development psychologically natural as presented? Or does your attitude toward him change because you come to know him better (cf. Trivulzio in *Monna Vanna*)? (7) Is he portrayed at length; or vitally projected in a very few words (cf. Cordelia in *Lear*)? (8) How is his character revealed? by his plot action? by dialogue? by soliloquy? by his stage business? by opinions expressed by others? by the actions of others? by "acting scenery"? by the author's description of him in the list of *dramatis personae* or in stage directions?

d. (1) Are the characters anywhere individualized by a mere superficial peculiarity or idiosyncrasy? Are any traits exaggerated or distorted? Cite. (See also VIII, c, 11-12.) (2) Study the choice and connotations of the names of the characters (as Justice Shallow, Orlando, Cordelia, Borachio, Roebuck Ramsden, John Tanner, Zweifel).

e. (1) What is the author's attitude toward his characters? Does he worship them, admire them, sympathize with them, criticize them, or seem hostile to them? Or does he simply coolly dissect them? (2) Is any one of the characters apparently the author's mouthpiece?

f. Does the author really understand human nature? Or does he apparently understand some types of individual and not others? Discuss, with illustrations.

g. (1) Are the characters typical of the age and place in which the play was written? (2) In the case of a play in which the scene is laid in some other age than the author's, does characterization of the author's own period

ever intrude into the drama (cf. *Androcles and the Lion*)? How, and why?

h. Does any character strike you as being of a type not found earlier in the history of the drama (cf. the insane father and the Machiavellian villain in *The Spanish Tragedy*; *The Unchastened Woman*)?

V. The Theme

a. *(1) Has the play a theme (philosophic, religious, scientific, sociological, political, mercantile, or the like)? If so, state it. (2) Is it explicitly expressed by a character; or is it implicit in portrayal or plot, thus appealing primarily to the auditor's emotions? (3) If expressed, is the expression naturally introduced? (4) Is it given especial emphasis by the circumstances of the stage situation, or by its position in the structure of the play? (5) How soon in the play is the basic thought clearly enunciated?

b. (1) Is the thesis broadly human in subject, or is it propagandist? (2) Is it of universal or particular application as to characters, time, or place (cf. *Rada* and *A Belgian Christmas Eve*)? (3) Is it in harmony with the principles of ethics? With universal ethics, or with the special ethical ideas of a particular place or period? (4) Is it of any real importance? (5) Is any particularly nice illustration of "poetic justice" prominent in the play?

c. (1) What is the basis in the play for the ideas here advanced? (2) Is the author an optimist, a pessimist, or a "meliorist"? (3) Is his attitude impassioned, argumentative, sweetly reasonable, humorous, satirical, flip-pant, self-congratulatorily clever, purely objective, or one of these masked as another? *(4) Is he sincere? What is the evidence of it? *(5) Does the author treat his subject fairly, doing full justice to both sides of the question? Does (can) this hurt his work as drama? *(6) Are his alleged typical cases really typical? Discuss.

(7) Does he fairly meet, or does he finally (consciously or unconsciously) evade, the issue? Or does he frankly leave the question in the form of a problem, with an indeterminate ending? (8) Do you agree with the author in his thesis? Why or why not? (9) As to the basic thought, do you find the play more convincing in performance than in reading? If so, can you explain this?

d. (1) So far as you know, how far does the author deal, in his other works, with the same general field? (2) Does he, so far as you know, elsewhere advance the same thesis? (3) Have you any information as to how (by his family life? education? reading? associates? experience?) he gained his interest in the general field or in this especial thesis?

e. (1) Does the author appear to have a "philosophy of life"? Can you discover what he thinks concerning any of the following: (a) God; (b) man's present life; (c) man's destiny; (d) man's free will; (e) any political or legal system; (f) any economic system; (g) any sociological view; (h) any religious attitude; (i) any ethical conception? (2) So far as you know, did his attitude change upon any of these points?

f. Are the ideas or the sentiments expressed in the play especially characteristic of the period in which the drama was written? Discuss.

VI. Methods, Devices, and Conventions of Dramatic Technique and Staging

In general, dramatic technique aims (1) at heightening the effect of the plot incidents, and yet (2) at making the heightened story appear natural and probable—due attention being paid to (3) the possibilities and limitations of production on the given stage. The heightening devices of Suspense, Crisis, Climax, and Surprise have already been indicated in Section III. In general, ques-

tions a-k below have to do with Heightening; questions l-n with Naturalness; questions o-q with Stage Limitations and Conventions.

a. Does the dramatist make effective use of Contrast? *(1) Are the principal characters strikingly contrasted? How? Are minor characters in contrast with principal characters? With each other? (2) Are there any scenes of *peripeteia*, or sudden reversal of the fortunes of a character for better or for worse? (3) Is any character torn with contrasted emotions (cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, III, i)? (4) Is there any use of dramatic irony, where the audience knows the facts to be strikingly different from what the character speaking thinks? (5) Is there any use of dramatic reversal, where an action or speech brings about the direct contrary of what the character intended? (6) Is there any use of strikingly antithetical speeches in succession (cf. *Richard III*, I, ii)? (7) Are there contrasts in costume effects? (8) Are there contrasts in scenic effects? Contrasts in light effects? (9) Are the contrasts effective? Are any "theatrical," overdrawn?

b. Does the dramatist make use of the devices of Similarity (Resemblance, Repetition, and Parallelism)? (1) Does the very possibility of the plot depend upon resemblance (as in *A Comedy of Errors*)? (2) Do several plot-threads base upon the same emotion or theme, thus blending into a harmonious whole (as in *A Midsummer-night's Dream*)? (3) Do various plot-threads have the same complication, thus reënforcing each other (as in *Lear*)? (4) Do character-groups parallel each other (as in *Love's Labour's Lost*)? (5) Are there marked parallelisms in the characterizations of two individual characters or in their costuming? Why? (6) Is an Idea driven home by repetition either of thought, or word, or action (as in *Les Avariés*)? (7) Is an Idea once introduced repeated later for an illuminating interpretation (as in *The Will*)? (8) Are situations or inci-

dents repeated, either seriously (as in *Gorboduc*) or in conscious or unconscious burlesque? (9) Are either repetition or parallelism of speech employed, either seriously to give intensity to the thought, or for ironic contrast, or as a stylistic device (as in *stichomithia* and euphuism)? (10) Are there parallelisms in background (as in *A Love Story of the Ages*, I, III, IV), or in other scenic effects? For what purpose? (11) Is the repeated element effectively placed (as, for instance, to give the effect of rounding the circle), and is it given the proper proportionate emphasis? (12) In any of the above cases, is the repetition exact, or is it diversified for Variety, for Contrast, or for Climax?

c. Is there any application of the principle of the "point of rest," either (1) to establish a standard of sanity (as Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*); or (2) to give the contrast of unconscious impassiveness (as the babe in *L'Intérieur*); or (3) physically in the stage setting of the scene?

d. (1) Does the dramatist carefully mould the sympathies of the audience, inclining them toward certain characters and against others? (2) What devices does he employ to this end? Why? (3) Is it conceivable that the same plot might be treated with the audience's sympathies reversed?

e. Are the Acts organically constructed? Are they climaxed? (Compare also the questions on the Individual Scene in Section VII).

f. *(1) Is any attempt made to preserve Unity of Time or Unity of Place? (2) Determine the total supposed time-lapse between the beginning and the end of the play? Cite the passages upon which the estimate depends. (3) Are there any cases in which no time-lapse whatever is supposed to take place between consecutive Acts or Scenes? Or does the time of successive Acts or Scenes even overlap? (4) Is any time-lapse indicated in the

midst of an Act or Scene by a momentary dropping of the curtain? (5) Is any device employed to hasten time, and thus obtain greater condensation in the whole or in the individual Scene (cf. *Othello*, I, i; II, ii)? (6) Is there any departure from strict chronological order in the succession of the acted parts? (7) How widely separated geographically are the places in which the action is supposed to take place? (8) Are widely separated places represented on the stage at one time (cf. *The Old Wives' Tale*; *Yes and No*)? (9) Is there any effect of isolation of place, either in the whole play or in the individual Scene (as in *The Tempest*; *Macbeth*, II)?

g. (1) Are any special methods used for the intensification of suspense (as in *L'Intérieur* and *A Night at an Inn*)? (2) Are any special devices used to increase the general impressiveness of a scene (cf. *The Witch*, V)?

h. (1) Are any atmospheric effects, such as storm, introduced organically into the play as background to the human situation, and to give it emphasis either by similarity or by contrast? In this respect observe especially the Crisis and the Close. --

i. (1) Is any use made of interpolated lyrics? Of interpolated music? Of sound effects? Of odor effects? (2) If so, what is the purpose? Realism? Plot-mechanism? Preparation? Mood-emphasis? Decoration? Symbolism? To cover the passage of time?

j. Is there any use of a repeated highly significant phrase (*das Schlagwort*) to enforce an idea important in the progress of the drama (as in the "compact majority" of *An Enemy of the People*)?

k. Is there any striking case of economy of dramatic means, i. e., of the accomplishment of several dramaturgic purposes by the use of a single incident or device (cf. *The Vikings of Helgeland*, II)?

l. (1) Is every action of every character in the play sufficiently, clearly, and naturally motivated; or do you sometimes feel that the author is simply pulling the wires of puppets, and that the characters are not acting for reasons of their own? Cite specific instances. (2) Are minor matters, such as entrances and exits, sufficiently and clearly motivated?

m. (1) Is the preparation for coming events clear and sufficient, but not too obvious? (2) Is every character clearly identified for the audience on first entrance? How? (3) Are pithy speeches summarizing the dramatic situation introduced just where the audience needs to be reminded of all the facts for an immediately following effect? (4) Are special pains taken at any point to prepare for what would otherwise seem an improbability; or to divert attention from the improbability at a critical moment (cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, I, iii; *Hamlet*, I, i)? (5) Is any character used to give the spectator the feeling of approaching ill (as Cassandra in *Agamemnon*)?

n. Are there any striking cases of good gradation (cf. *Othello*, III, iii)?

o. (1) Is the author compelled to face the problem of dealing with scenes that are essentially unstageable (as in *Antony and Cleopatra*, III, x)? (Cf. III, e, 5.) How does he solve the problem? (2) Have the mechanical difficulties of stage presentation forced other changes (cf. *The Hour Glass*)? Just how?

p. Is there any use of any of the "dramatic conventions"? (1) Of the soliloquy? (2) Of the aside? (3) Of a conversation unheard by others on the stage? (4) Of pantomimic dialogue while others are talking? (5) Of foreign characters speaking English when their native tongue would be more natural? (6) Of quickened stage time? (7) Of the interposition of a supposed "fourth wall" between the stage and the audience? (8) Of the

interpolated tableau? (9) Of the carefully grouped full stage picture at the end of Acts? (10) Is a character ever apparently conscious of the presence of the audience? (11) Does the actor always refrain from turning his back on the audience when speaking? (12) In any given case does the use of any one of these conventions appear objectionable? Why or why not? Does the type of play affect the matter? Why? (13) Has it apparently required special skill at any point to avoid the use of any one of these conventions? If so, what device was employed?

q. Is the scenery sympathetic? contrasted? interpretive of action or mood? realistic for verisimilitude? or neutral? Is any use made of "acting scenery"?

r. (1) How far is the technique of this dramatist based upon that of any other dramatist? Can you illustrate by comparison of works? (2) How far does this author use the same device in successive plays (cf. Shakespeare's cases of mistaken identity, girl pages, etc.)?

VII. An Individual Scene

a. (1) In what sense is this a scene? (2) What is the purpose of the scene? Does it advance the action, give necessary information, indicate character, emphasize a mood, tranquillize the spectator after past emotion, give a quiet prelude to a coming emotional blow, supply comedy relief, serve as a "division scene" to give time for change of scenery, cover a necessary change of costume, give opportunity for pageantry, add lyrical ornamentation, contain interest of interpolated feats of physical strength or skill, or does it effect several of these ends?

b. (1) If the scene is really a dramatic scene, what are the characters in conflict? (2) Is its seriousness indicated early in the passage? (3) Are its time relations with the preceding scene, and are the intervening events, also indicated early and with sufficient clearness? (4)

Study the psychological reactions of character on character (cf. *The Red Robe*, II). (5) Is there a crisis? If so, is the scene balanced about the crisis, rising to and falling away from it in fairly equal proportions (as in *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, i); or does it rise to the crisis and end sharply in it (as in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, III)? (6) Is there suspense? How produced? Is there anywhere a temporary balking of the expectation of the audience for additional suspense? (7) Is there striking gradation? (8) Is there a "strong curtain"? (9) Does the scene anywhere contain links binding it to a coming scene? How? (10) Indicate the important "plot-lines."

c. Are there few or many people on the stage? Does it suddenly or gradually fill or empty? Is a spectacular effect aimed at? By what means?

d. Is the background sympathetic? contrasted? contributory to action or mood? convincingly realistic? neutral?

See other questions for Heightening; Naturalness; Contrasts in characters, costumes, and settings; Entrances and Exits; Interpolations.

VIII. The Style

a. Characterize the author as to the following general stylistic points, citing illustrative passages from the play where advisable: (1) Obviousness *vs.* profundity of thought. (2) Simplicity *vs.* obscurity in expression. (3) Imagination. (4) Sentiment *vs.* sentimentality. (5) Wit *vs.* humor. (6) Irony and satire. (7) Eloquence. (8) Epigrammatic force. (9) Use of classical and literary allusion. (10) Use of figures of speech. (11) Occurrence of the memorable phrase, the "inevitable word." (12) By its cleverness does the style ever distract your attention from the dramatist's thought?

b. (1) Is the play written in prose, in blank verse, in rhymed verse, in some other form, or in a mixture of two or more forms? Define the fundamental medium. Why has this fundamental medium been selected? Where there is a mixture of several forms, try to determine specifically the functions of the various media (as to mark difference in mood, to set off the "play within a play," to point the "sentence," to serve as "tag," and the like). How well adapted are they to their respective uses? Where there is a mixture, can you, in a general way, indicate the proportionate amounts of the various forms? (2) Analyze and criticize any special metrical or stanzaic effects (as in *A Thousand Years Ago*). (3) Analyze any peculiar prose effects (as in Maeterlinck). (4) Point out and analyze any particularly striking tone-color effects (as, "What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?").

c. Criticize the dialogue. (1) Does it sharply, vividly, and condensedly express character? (2) Is it natural in tone? (3) Does it pique the attention by a constant ripple of small surprises? (4) Does every speech produce a distinct change in the mental attitudes of the speakers? (5) Is every speech crystal clear to the auditor? (6) Is every superfluous word elided? (7) Are the speeches climaxed, or do they weaken as they end? (8) Watch for cases of peculiar power of suggestion in the use of words. Cite. (9) Are the speeches generally long, or with brief interruptions? or do they vary greatly in length? Or is the dialogue almost uniformly snappy? (10) Is any attempt made to balance speech against speech as to length (cf. Greek and Senecan *stichomithia*)? Or to give a balance involving repetition of form in successive speeches? (11) Is there any tendency toward the use of special devices of sentence structure, diction, or prose rhythm (cf. Lyly's euphuism)? (12) Do the characters vary from each other in speech as to sentence length; sentence complexity; correctness, appropriateness, and suggestiveness of diction; use of

figures of speech; mannerisms; conciseness; music of language? Does the particular stage situation modify their natural manner of speech? Naturally? (13) If dialect is employed, how far is the dialectal effect dependent upon mere bad spelling or mispronunciation, on the use of conventional tag-words, on word-order, on idiom, on rhythm, or on thought? (14) Are there any speeches that will not deliver well? (15) Note any special stylistic idiosyncrasies or mannerisms of the author. (16) Is the style at any point obviously based upon the style of any other author?

d. (1) Are the stage directions mere stage manager's notes, or are they given at length and with literary polish? Do they approximate the effect of a description in a novel? (2) Do they contain material that could plainly not be represented on the stage? If so, what is the author's purpose?

e. Is there any unevenness in the writing of the play? If so, can you account for it on any ground, as, for instance, a mixture of an old and a revised form, or interpolations by another hand, or haste? Discuss.

f. *What brief passage or passages in the play do you find most impressive? Why? *Are they worth committing to memory?

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